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SUBJECT: Goma Situation Report for December 10, 2007

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

Note: The following report was provided by Embassy Kinshasa's political officer in Goma. This report was filed before Nkunda forces on December 10 recaptured territory lost at the beginning of the current campaign. End note.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The FARDC military campaign in North Kivu remains stalled, with Nkunda's line holding at Kibati and Nkunda having made a foray within two kilometers of Mushaki. MONUC's North Kivu Brigade Commander helicoptered with a team into Kirolirwe IDP camp December 9 to sensitize the IDPs to possible danger and persuade them to move; however, they insisted on staying put. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) According to military and political sources at MONUC, FARDC has consolidated its hold over heights of ridges in the immediate vicinity of Kingi in Masisi territory, but Nkunda's forces continue to hold fast at nearby Kibati. Early on December 8 (a day of persistent rain), Nkunda's forces took position on a ridge (Ruhanda, two kilometers north of Mushaki) which FARDC had not occupied during its campaign in Mushaki, and fighting has been ongoing there for three days. MONUC discounts rumors that FARDC has moved forces along an east-west axis from Masisi toward Kirolirwe, nor does it have any indication of an FARDC move on the Tongo area (in the Rutshuru-Kitchanga axis) or of any Nkunda action in the Rutshuru area. FARDC's two helicopters do not appear to be in action, possibly because the damage suffered by one of them on the first day of the campaign was more serious than first thought.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC North Kivu Brigade Commander General Indrajeet Narayan led a security/humanitarian team to Kirolirwe by helicopter on December 9 (a trip planned for December 8 but deferred due to inclement weather). The object of the visit was to sensitize the IDP's and local population of the approaching military campaign and to discuss with them a possible move a short distance to the east or west, off the main north-south axis where military activity is most likely to occur. IDP representatives in Kirolirwe told the team that they "had no intention" to move, claiming that Kirolirwe was the best grazing location for their cattle and that any move east or west would make them more vulnerable to attack from FDLR or Mai Mai groups.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC/Civil Affairs reports that approximately 600 persons out of the Kirolirwe population, mostly Hutu and Hunde, have moved north toward Kitchanga in the past few days, leaving the remaining populace even more Tutsi. MONUC/Civil Affairs believes that CNDP has a strong hold over the IDP's. WFP notes that the refusal by the Kirolirwe IDP's to move is unusual in the North Kivu context, where typically the least threat of fighting causes significant displacement of people.

¶5. (SBU) MONUC Head of Office Ulli Mwambulukutu noted to poloff

that Nkunda's CNDP had called for a ceasefire over the weekend and that FARDC Land Forces Commander General Gabriel Amisi, who has a long relationship with and entree to Nkunda, was now in Goma. It seemed, he suggested, a good moment -- with fighting at something of an impasse -- for negotiations between the DRC government and Nkunda, although he had no information that any such negotiations were occurring.

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